

AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION:

Please amend the paragraph bridging pages 10 and 11 as follows:

The intermediate block 170 has an elliptical opening (or a second opening) 170b formed at its center. A connecting portion or a shaft 131 extends through the opening 170b and the opening 120a of the process chamber casing 120. The shaft 131 is provided for supporting a table 105 disposed in the process chamber P and is integrally attached to the upper face of the moving block 130. The opposed block 140, the moving block 130 and the second differential pumping seal 160 form a pressure-reducing chamber R together. A passage 132 extending through the shaft 131 provides communication between the process chamber P in the process chamber casing 120 and the pressure-reducing chamber R. A portion, at which the pressure-reducing chamber R confronts the lower face of the moving block 130, is an opening 140a. Here, the moving block 130 is connected to the ~~not-shown~~ drive unit through a connecting portion 133 (Fig. 2). The drive unit to be used can be exemplified by a combination of a motor and a feed screw such as a threaded screw, a combination of a motor, a belt and a pulley, or a linear motor. Moreover, the drive unit and the connecting portion 133 can also be omitted by providing an ultrasonic motor (although not shown) capable of driving the moving block 130 with respect to the opposed block 140 in place of or in addition to the hydrostatic gas bearings 185. In place of the connecting portion 133, still moreover, the moving block 130 may be provided at its longitudinal end portion with a connecting portion, through which the drive unit is connected. In this modification, it is preferred that the opening in the shorter direction of the moving block 130 is shielded.